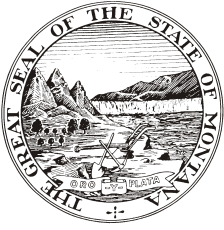


DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR

DR. ROBERT WYNIA
DIRECTOR

STATE OF MONTANA

www.dphhs.mt.gov

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES PROGRAM

201 First Street South Suite 3

Great Falls MT 59405

(406) 454-6085

FAX (406) 454-6082

TO: Gay Matter, Board Chairperson
Darlene Pomeroy, Executive Director
New Horizons Unlimited

FM: Cathy Murphy, Quality Improvement Specialist

DT: June 6, 2005

RE: Quality Assurance Review FY04

The annual on-site review portion of the quality assurance process was conducted on March 21, 21, and 29, 2005. References and guidelines for this review are found in the Developmental Disabilities Program handbook titled "Quality Assurance Process for Adult and Group Home Services" dated July 11, 2003.

New Horizons Unlimited provides day/work, group home, and supported living services to adults with developmental disabilities. This report contains findings, comments, and recommendations noted during the on-site review and observations over the past year. These are also noted on 14 Quality Assurance Observation Sheets, which are attached to this report. *New Horizons Unlimited does not provide any Community Supports services.*

Administrative

The Executive Director's Annual Report (January 2005) prepared for New Horizons Unlimited's Annual Meeting details 49 noteworthy events that occurred over the previous year. Some of the most significant events include continued increase of consumers' income through newspaper delivery and recycling, one consumer living his lifetime goal of being a DJ at the local radio station, one consumer moved into an apartment from the group home, significant property improvements, and the donation of a house which will be rented to interested supported living consumers.

"An Equal Opportunity Employer"

New Horizons Unlimited has provided me with a copy of their Policies and Procedures and makes available copies of changes as they occur. While reviewing the PP Manual and in the course of interviewing staff utilizing the Staff Survey, I discovered the policy regarding the reporting of witnessed or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation needs to be updated to include mandatory reporting by staff to Adult Protective Services (refer to QAOS #12). It should be noted that all staff interviewed were aware of what was reportable to APS, and of their requirement to report those instances witnessed or suspected, however the current policy and practice involve staff reporting to the Executive Director who then contacts APS. New Horizons has also developed policies for incident management, Person Centered Planning, and privacy policies.

NHU operates one group home for eight individuals. This is licensed annually by the State of Montana. The licensing process includes on-site inspections and records reviews from the Deputy Fire Marshall, County Sanitation/Health Inspector, and Group Home Licensing personnel. There were no violations noted by the Deputy Fire Marshall, and the Sanitarian required two minor corrective actions (dish washing procedure change and disposal of some food allowed to cool to room temperature) which were immediately addressed. The Sanitarian noted the home was "very clean and orderly." I have made several announced and unannounced visits to the group home and have always found it to be clean, orderly, and comfortable. Residents always appear content and pleased with their living environment. (Please refer to QAOS #7.)

New Horizons Unlimited (NHU) continues to provide an excellent array of residential, day/work, and transportation services to our consumer population in the Harlem community. The Council awarded NHU Re-accreditation with Distinction for a period of three years in September 2000. Accreditation is no longer a requirement of the Developmental Disabilities Program and New Horizons has opted not to schedule another accreditation survey at this time.

Internal communication systems are in place and utilized by staff of New Horizons. Communication logs travel back and forth from the Day Center and residential services. Significant events are noted daily in the log.

No corrective actions were noted in the most recent Fiscal Audit. In fact, from my observations New Horizons Unlimited maintains very detailed records of client funds and expenditures.

Appendix I information details staffing ratios for residential and day services. These staffing ratios are checked through scheduled and unscheduled visits, phone calls, and through paper reviews of staff schedules. New Horizons continues to maintain appropriate staff to consumer ratios, and often exceeds the minimum ratio of staff to consumers.

Residential

New Horizons Unlimited operates one group home for eight individuals. They also provide supported living services to individuals who either reside in their own homes or rented apartments which are owned by New Horizons. Many of the NHU consumers are dually diagnosed and also receive some support services from mental health counselors and assistance from tribal support agencies. Assisting the consumers with management of their mental health needs can be quite time consuming, and is more and more difficult as resources become less available. The management and staff of NHU have risen to the challenge and always manage to find the resources and supports needed for their consumers.

Accomplishments:

There have been several major accomplishments in the residential services provided by New Horizons Unlimited. They include several property improvements at the group home, one individual moving from the group home into an apartment and supported through supported living services, and the donation to New Horizons of a house which will be rented to interested supported living consumers once renovations are completed.

Programmatic Deficiencies:

Though staff have improved in the implementation and documentation of data for objectives identified in Individual Plans there continues to be a need for improvement, particularly by staff providing supported living services. A second area that NHU needs to concentrate on is the completion and timely submission of Quarterly Report information. Both of these issues are addressed in QAOS #3 and #4, and in the Service Planning and Delivery portion of this report. Though training in the IP process, including data collection and record keeping, have been provided in the past it may be beneficial to consider further training in these areas.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of consumers is paramount to the NHU staff. They respond immediately and efficiently to all health and safety concerns and properly report all incidents. Physical, dental, vision, and other necessary exams are conducted at recommended intervals. Mental health supports are in place for those individuals in need of medical intervention and supervision and counseling services. New Horizons also utilizes area professionals to provide nutritional assessments, menu planning and educational classes for consumers.

Bathing protocols have been developed for each consumer. These are individualized based on the need of the consumer and are updated annually at IP meetings.

Medications are stored and administered in a safe manner. The medication log book was found to be in satisfactory condition upon review. PRN medications protocols are in place for each of the consumers. Only Med Certified staff assist consumers with the administration of their medications. I have observed this process in the group home on several different occasions and find the staff's medication management process to be acceptable. One individual receiving Supported Living services indicated to me that he would like to be independent with his medications. Others may also become more self-reliant if given instruction and support. I realize that some individuals may never become totally independent in administering their own medications, however, there is benefit in individuals independently completing as many steps as possible. It would be appropriate to discuss this topic in more detail while developing each person's Individual Plan.

Staff conduct and document evacuation drills on a regular basis. A review of evacuation drill records indicates drills are varied across times of day, including late night and early morning shifts. Water temperature, smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, and furnace filters are checked regularly with service provided as needed. In addition, the Deputy Fire Marshall, Sanitation Inspector, and Group Home Licensing agent in preparation for licensing renewal inspect the group home annually. No violations were noted by the Deputy Fire Marshall, and the Sanitarian noted the home was "very clean and orderly." During scheduled and unannounced visits, I have found the home to be very neat and clean, and to have adequate cleaning supplies on hand. Staff are observed to use proper food handling and preparation techniques. (Please refer to QAOS #7.) I have also visited various Supported Living sites. These too are always clean, and consumers seemed very proud of their living environments as well as appreciative of the support they receive from staff. (See QAOS #9.) Supported living and group home staff spend a great deal of effort in assisting consumers maintain clean, healthy, and comfortable living environments.

Emergency numbers are clearly posted at the group home and supported living homes. Consumers receiving supported living services were able to identify at least two methods to obtain assistance. Both staff and consumers indicate there is always emergency back-up available when needed.

SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

New Horizons Unlimited has been working with the Case Manager to develop more person-centered Individual Plans. Teams, often including members from residential and vocational services, have been meeting prior to IPs to assist individuals in identifying their goals, dreams, aspirations and resources. Consumers appear to enjoy this and appear to benefit from this process when developing the IP.

QAOS sheets #1-5 and #13 address the Individual Plan. QAOS #1, 5, and 13 deal specifically with the information gathering and Individual Planning process. Forms which can be prepared prior to the IP meeting are usually completed ahead of time. This includes medical and financial information, and assessment information. As was noted in the previous year's Review, it is quite common for the Day Program Manager to write and present assessment summaries, including residential information, at an individual's IP. It is recommended that staff who work directly with an individual complete the assessments, prepare complete assessment summaries with all domains addressed, and attend the IP meeting including presenting assessment information and participating in the development the individual's goals and objectives. Not only would this make the Day Program Manager's work load more manageable, but it would also provide more detailed and comprehensive information to the rest of the IP team, and assist staff in understanding the IP process and their role in providing services to our consumers. Staff have received training in this area, but perhaps, training using the IP Handbook or Personal Supports Planning information would be beneficial to all staff.

QAOS sheet #2 refers to implementation and documentation of progress of objectives by both the Day and Group Home staff. Though there were some gaps in data, staff is making progress in running programs and recording data, thus increasing opportunities for consumers to increase their skills and abilities.

Documentation of objectives for individuals receiving Supported Living services is not consistent as noted in QAOS #3. This is an area of concern that needs to be addressed as there are some significant gaps in data which would lead one to believe that not all supported living consumers are receiving services as specified in their Individual Plans.

QAOS #4 refers to the need for New Horizons to submit Quarterly Report information to the Case Manager and QIS in a consistent and timely manner. This continues to be an ongoing area of concern and will become even more critical for NHU to complete as we move into the new rates reimbursement system.

The consumers of New Horizons Unlimited enjoy a variety of leisure and recreational activities. (Please refer to QAOS #15.) Many of the consumers are of Native American heritage and enjoy the cultural opportunities provided by their community and neighboring towns. Attending rodeos and participating in pow-wows are more available in the summer months, however, there is also a winter fair that is also widely attended by NHU consumers. As with most small towns, high school sports are also a very popular function and many of the consumers of New Horizons are avid sports fans. One of the consumers has been on a bowling league with other members of the community for several years. Going to movies, fishing, shopping at the local dollar store, and playing cards at home are also favored activities. NHU consumers also patronize the local library. Staff have been encouraged to be more creative with activities. They have assisted consumers in starting a garden and have also participated in kite flying.

The Case Manager routinely completes Consumer Satisfaction Surveys with each consumer. The QIS also completed some surveys as part of this Annual Review. All Consumer Satisfaction Surveys reviewed indicated, as noted on QAOS #11, that the consumers are satisfied with the services they receive from New Horizons. They also indicated there is always help available if needed, and that they know how to obtain help, and that staff consistently treat them respectfully.

STAFFING

New Horizons Unlimited has hired a number of new staff over the past year, and are complimented on the quality of the recent hires. Staff hiring records for four individuals hired within the past 12 months were reviewed. NHU is to be commended for obtaining criminal background checks prior to staff working their first shift. NHU also updates background checks on all employees annually. (Please refer to QAOS #11.)

The staff of NHU receive and adequate amount of training and retraining to equip them to do their jobs as noted in QAOS #14. Staff are trained in Mandt, FA/CPR, Client Rights and other required training. New staff also undergo a comprehensive orientation process. Over the past year staff have also received training in Individual Plans, Individual Program Plans and Task Analysis, and Quarterly Reports. Staff and consumers also regularly receive nutritional training. NHU now has two certified Mandt instructors. NHU does an excellent job of utilizing available resources from Ft. Belknap, the Community College, and their Case Manager and QIS to provide additional training.

QAOS #14 also addresses the issue of staff retaining and applying information from various training topics, also discussed in QAOS #13. While conducting staff surveys, it became evident that staff do not always understand their role in the IP process, even though they have received training on this topic in a variety of contexts. It is recommended that the management of NHU evaluate the current training process. A training schedule specific to the IP process may also be helpful.

Staff to consumer ratios have been checked throughout the year. This is done by phone, announced and unannounced visits, and by review of the schedule. During checks over the past year New Horizons has consistently maintained an appropriate staff to consumer ratio.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT/APS

As was noted previously, staff promptly attend to the needs of NHU consumers and readily document all accidents, injuries, or other significant incidents. New Horizons Unlimited does not currently have a system in place to track trends with regards to incidents. (Please refer to QAOS #6.) NHU does plan on utilizing the State of Montana's incident management system to record, compile, and track information when it becomes available. This will help the NHU management team to identify trends over long periods of time and develop corrective action plans. It should be noted, that though NHU does not currently have a system in place to track incident trends, the Executive Director does review each incident report and assures follow-up occurs as needed.

Information on abuse, neglect and exploitation is posted and the APS phone number is readily available to staff. Responses from staff interviews indicate they are aware of what constitutes abuse, neglect, and exploitation. New Horizons Unlimited maintains a policy of zero tolerance for the mal-treatment of their consumers and staff do report witnessed or suspected incidences of client abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Currently they report such instances to their supervisor and/or the Executive Director. They do not independently contact APS, but rather rely on the management staff to make the formal report. This does not appear to be a training issue as staff are trained that they are mandatory reporters and are obligated to report instances or suspicions of abuse, neglect, or exploitation to APS. Rather the policy in the current policy and procedure manual needs to be corrected as it states that staff should report such instances to the Executive Director who will then notify APS. This is discussed in QAOS #12.

New Horizons Unlimited did make a referral to APS on an employee for suspected verbal abuse and maltreatment. APS discontinued their investigation when the individual voluntarily resigned.

Work/Day/Community Employment

New Horizons provides day/work services for up to 17 individuals. The day center offers recycling services, a woodshop, and newspaper delivery to Harlem and the neighboring community. One individual has a volunteer job at the local radio station as a disc jockey.

Accomplishments

A major accomplishment of New Horizons Unlimited over the past year is that one of the consumers is now volunteering as a DJ at the local radio station. This has been a long-term goal for this individual and he always appears excited when talking about his experiences at the radio station.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Like Residential services, the Work/Day services area of New Horizons Unlimited maintains a high standard in regards to the health and safety of the consumers they serve, see QAOS #8. The main work area, used for newspaper rolling, running programs, meals, consumer meetings, and educational seminars is always clean and materials are neatly organized. The woodshop and recycling areas are also well organized, tidy, and hazard free.

New Horizons staff regularly check water temperature, smoke detectors, and fire extinguishers. Maintenance and/or service is provided as needed. I have checked the water temperature several times and always find it to be acceptable (below 120 degrees).

A change since last year is that the consumers now bring their own prepared lunches from home rather than having a meal prepared at the Day Center. I have observed staff and consumers cleaning tables to prepare for mealtime, and also afterwards while preparing to resume work.

NHU regularly utilizes the services of the Blaine Co. Extension office and the Diabetic Clinic to provide nutritional information, education, and support for the consumers and staff.

SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY

As part of the information gathering process for this annual review day services staff were observed running programs and recording data. Some objectives included money recognition and name writing. Though there are some gaps in data, there is improvement from last year as noted on QAOS #2.

Almost every week at the Day Center there is a Consumer Meeting. This meeting is used to review the rights of consumers, address concerns or issues, review upcoming community activities, and to plan for special events. The format of this meeting allows for equal participation from all consumers and staff.

For additional information, please refer to Residential section.

STAFFING

The staff of New Horizons are all cross-trained and often work in multiple environments. It is very common for some of the day staff to assist supported living consumers with breakfast and other needs, particularly on newspaper delivery days. Additional information about staff may be found in the Residential section.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Please refer to Residential section.

Community Supports

New Horizons Unlimited does not currently provide Community Supports services.

Transportation

New Horizons provides transportation services for home and work needs, and recreational/leisure activities of all their consumers. Rides are documented per person, per trip. Records are up to date. NHU policies and procedures requires a daily checklist be completed on all vans. By casual inspection, vehicles appear in satisfactory condition.

NHU has received grants from the Department of Transportation for vehicle purchase. DOT periodically audits and inspects these vehicles for maintenance and safety. There were no corrective actions noted for this past year. NHU also enrolls staff in the Advanced Driving Course each year. This past year 2 staff attended the course.

Conclusion

The consumers of New Horizons Unlimited appear very happy and state they are pleased with the services they receive from New Horizons. Though the medical and mental health needs of the consumers requires considerable attention from the staff, they are committed to attending to the health and safety needs of the consumers.

I am confident that the service planning and delivery concerns noted in this review can be improved with more detailed training and follow-up. Generally, the staff of New Horizons is a very caring group, and I believe, dedicated to assisting the individuals they work with in enhancing and improving the quality of their lives.

Respectfully,

Cathy Murphy,
Quality Improvement Specialist

CC: Bruci Ann Hall, Region II Manager
Tim Plaska, Community Services Bureau Chief
John Zeeck, Quality Assurance Specialist
Contract File

Attachments:

Executive Director's Annual Report, January 2005
Quality Assurance Observation Sheets (QAOS) #1-15